

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (Original) A method for identifying an agent that has an inhibitory effect on the complex-formation of an ARE-containing mRNA and an HuR protein comprising:

- (a) providing a soluble form of a HuR protein, with the proviso that a full-length HuR-glutathione-S-transferase fusion protein is excluded,
- (b) providing an ARE-containing mRNA,
- (c) providing a candidate compound,
wherein at least one of (a), (b) and (c) is labeled,
- (d) mixing a) and b) in the presence of (c) and in the absence of (c) for a sufficient period of time so that a) and b) can form a complex,
- (e) detecting the amount of complexes formed in step (d) and/or detect the non-complexed mRNA/protein species,
- (f) comparing the amount of complexes formed and/or non-complexed mRNA/protein species found in the presence and in the absence of (c), and
- (g) choosing an agent which has an influence on the complex formation detected in step (f).

Claim 2. (Original) The method of claim 1 characterized in that the HuR protein is provided as a homogenous solution.

Claim 3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~or 2~~ characterized in that HuR is a soluble form of a recombinant full-length protein or a variant or mutant of a soluble form of a full-length protein.

Claim 4. (Currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ characterized in that the mRNA fragment is fluorescently labeled.

Claim 5. (Currently amended) The method of ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~ characterized in that the detection method is a fluorescence spectroscopic method selected from the group consisting of Single Molecule Spectroscopy, Fluorescence Correlation Spectroscopy, Fluorescence Intensity Distribution Analysis, Steady-State Fluorescence Intensity, Fluorescence Anisotropy and Energy Transfer.

Claim 6. (Original) A screening assay (kit) for identifying an agent that has an inhibitory effect on the complex-formation of an ARE-containing mRNA and an HuR protein comprising as a main component

- a) a soluble form of a HuR protein, with the proviso that a full-length HuR–glutathione-S-transferase fusion protein is excluded,
- b) an ARE-containing mRNA, and
- c) optionally means for detection of the amount of complexes formed between said HuR protein and said ARE-containing mRNA and/or for detection of non-complexed mRNA/protein species.

Claim 7. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition comprising an agent identified by a method according to claim 1 in association with at least one pharmaceutical excipient.

Claim 8. (Original) Use of a pharmaceutical composition according to claim 7 for the treatment of a disorder having an etiology associated with the production of a substance selected from the group consisting of cytokine, growth factor, proto-oncogene or a viral protein, preferably the agent is selected from the group consisting of IL-1, IL-2, IL-3, IL-4, IL-8, GM-CSF, TNF- α , VEGF, AT-R1, Cox-2, c-fos and c-myc.

Claim 9. (Original) A full-length HuR protein of SEQ ID NO:1 or SEQ ID NO:2, wherein the C-terminal amino acid in position 326 is esterified.

Claim 10. (Original) An isolated RNA sequence motif which is the binding site for HuR.